

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

Please **amend** Claims 5 and 18 by substituting the following:

5. (Thrice amended) A process apparatus including an airtight process vessel, an exhaust system for exhausting gas from the process vessel, and a baffle plate for partitioning the process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system,

wherein the baffle plate includes a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

E1 wherein each slit includes an exhaust-passage opening facing the exhaust passage and a process-chamber opening facing the process chamber,

wherein at least one side of said process-chamber opening includes a sloped inner surface at least along the slit length, said sloped inner surface of the process-chamber opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate and widens towards the process-chamber opening, and

wherein at least one side of said exhaust-passage opening includes an inner surface that is substantially perpendicular to the surface of the baffle plate, said inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

18. (Amended) A baffle plate for partitioning a process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system, said baffle plate including a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein each slit includes an exhaust-passage opening facing the exhaust passage and a process-chamber opening facing the process chamber,

wherein at least one side of said process-chamber opening includes a sloped inner surface at least along the slit length, said sloped inner surface of the process-chamber opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate and widens towards the process-chamber opening, and

wherein at least one side of said exhaust-passage opening includes an inner surface that is substantially perpendicular to the surface of the baffle plate, said inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.

Please **add** the following new claims:

27. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 14, wherein said plurality of slits are 180 to 540 slits.

28. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 14, wherein the baffle plate is made of aluminum and has a surface oxidized by anodic oxidation.

29. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 14, wherein a total area of the openings of the slits facing the process chamber make up 25% to 75% of the total surface area of the baffle plate facing the process chamber.

30. (New) The baffle plate according to claim 29, wherein said total area of the slits of the baffle plate is 54%.
